

Message Text

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LIMDIS

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TAGS: PEPR EAID ASEAN JA TH
SUBJECT: SONODA MEETINGS WITH ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS AND RTG
LEADERS

REF: BANGKOK 17854

1. SUMMARY: JAPANESE EMBASSY MINISTER PROVIDED CHARGE FURTHER
DESCRIPTION OF MEETINGS BY FONMIN SONODA WITH ASEAN FONMINS
AND THAI LEADERS. JAPANESE AND THAIS DESCRIBED MEETINGS AS
"FRANK AND FRIENDLY." JAPANESE INDICATED SUPPORT FOR THE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY OF ASEAN AND THAILAND, BUT SONODA POINTED
OUT CANDIDLY THE WEAKER POINTS IN ASEAN AND THAI ECONOMIC REQUESTS
AND INDICATED THAT JAPANESE DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS INHIBIT TO
SOME DEGREE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE BY GOJ TO SOME ASEAN ECONOMIC
PROPOSALS. RESPONDING TO KEEN ASEAN INTEREST, SONODA TOLD THE
ASEAN MINISTERS THAT JAPAN WOULD PROCEED WITH THE PEACE AND
FRIENDSHIP TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PRC DESPITE HEAVY SOVIET
PRESSURE. SONODA TOLD THE ASEAN LEADERS THAT JAPAN WOULD ONLY
ACCEPT INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ALREADY IN JAPAN. END SUMMARY.

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2. JAPANESE EMBASSY MINISTER TANAKA GAVE CHARGE JUNE 21 FOLLOWING
ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON FOREIGN MINISTER SONODA'S MEETINGS WITH
ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS AND BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR
THAI OFFICIALS. THIS FILLS OUT VIEWS JAPANESE EMBOFF HAD EARLIER
GIVEN US (REFTEL).

3. MEETING WITH ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS: TANAKA SAID THAT JUNE 17

SESSION WITH ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WAS THE "FRANKEST" HE HAD WITNESSED IN HIS DIPLOMATIC CAREER. ALL OF ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WERE CANDID, OPEN AND ALMOST BLUNT IN DESCRIBING WHAT THEY SAW AS JAPAN'S "WEAK POINTS" AND STRENGTHS. SONODA RESPONDED IN A SIMILARLY OPEN, CANDID FASHION AND OVERALL ATMOSPHERE WAS GOOD. TANAKA SAID THAT JAPANESE WERE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' READINESS TO LET SONODA OFF THE HOOK ON SEVERAL OF THE MOST ABRASIVE ECONOMIC ISSUES. FOR HIS PART, SONODA APPEARED VERY MUCH IMPRESSED BY THE FORTHRIGHT ASEAN STATEMENTS ON THE AREA'S IMPORTANCE TO JAPAN AND THE NEED FOR JAPAN TO PLAY AN ACTIVE, POSITIVE ROLE.

4. ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, TANAKA SAID THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS PRESSED MOST SERIOUSLY ON THE NEED FOR JAPANESE MTN CONCESSIONS AND AS WELL AS ON ASEAN POSITION ON THE COMMON FUND. WITH REGARD TO MTN, SONODA BLUNTLY TOLD FOREIGN MINISTERS THAT THE GOJ HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION CONCESSIONS TO ASEAN, BUT THERE IS MAJOR DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO THEM, AND EXTREMELY SENSITIVE POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS ARE NOW GOING ON IN JAPAN. HE SAID THAT ANY SPECULATION ABOUT WHAT JAPAN MIGHT DO WOULD ONLY JEOPARDIZE THE GOJ'S EFFORTS TO SECURE DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR WHAT HE IMPLIED WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS. ACCORDING TO TANAKA, ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS ACCEPTED SONODA'S POSITION IN GOOD SPIRIT. WITH REGARD TO COMMON FUND, SONODA SAID THAT HE WOULD FAITHFULLY CONVEY ASEAN POSITION TO OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN ECONOMIC SUMMIT MEETING BUT THAT HE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO WARN THEM BLUNTLY THAT THE ASEAN POSITION MUST ALSO

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BE SOFTENED. DISCUSSION ON JAPANESE SUPPORT FOR FIVE ASEAN PROJECTS WAS, ACCORDING TO TANAKA, FAIRLY PREDICTABLE. SONODA POINTED OUT THAT THE FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE FOR THE PROJECTS BUT THAT ONLY TWO HAVE SO FAR MOVED ACTUALLY TO PROJECT STAGE.

5. TANAKA INDICATED THAT BROADER REGIONAL, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN SONODA'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS. ASEAN MINISTERS WERE VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN CURRENT STATE OF PLAY IN JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH BOTH THE PRC AND USSR. SONODA TOLD MINISTERS THAT HE WOULD BE GOING TO PEKING IN EARLY JULY FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DRAFT SINO-JAPANESE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY AND THAT THE GOJ RESENTS THE HEAVY-HANDED SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE JAPAN'S POLICY TOWARDS THE PRC. HE INDICATED THAT DESPITE ANY "SQUALLS" IN JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE USSR, THE GOJ WILL PROCEED IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PRC IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS OWN POLICY OBJECTIVES, NOT SOVIET THREATS.

6. ACCORDING TO TANAKA, THE ASEAN MINISTERS EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE INDOCHINA SITUATION AND WERE INTERESTED IN SONODA'S MEETING WITH CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY. SONODA TOLD ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS THAT JAPANESE AMBASSADOR IN

PEKING WOULD SHORTLY BE ACCREDITED, ALSO TO PHNOM PENH. HE SAID THAT IENG SARY, WHEN TOLD THIS IN TOKYO, AGREED BUT GAVE NO INDICATION AS TO WHETHER THE CAMBODIANS WOULD TAKE RECIPROCAL ACTION SOON BY ACCREDITING ONE OF THEIR AMBASSADORS. IN BILATERAL DISCUSSION WITH PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK, SONODA TOLD HIM THAT IENG SARY HAD DESCRIBED BORDER INCIDENTS WITH THAILAND AS BEING CAUSED BY SMALL, NON-CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS ALONG THE BORDER, IMPLYING THAT PHNOM PENH WAS NOT INVOLVED. TANAKA SAID KRIANGSAK CLEARLY DIDN'T BELIEVE THIS EXPLANATION, TELLING SONODA THAT THAI INTELLIGENCE HAS CONFIRMED CAMBODIAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE BORDER INCIDENTS. SONODA THEN TOLD KRIANGSAK THAT HE WOULD INSTRUCT THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR WHEN HE PRESENTS HIS CREDENTIALS TO CONVEY TO THE CAMBODIAN LEADERS THE GOJ VIEW THAT THE BORDER INCIDENTS WITH THAILAND DO CAMBODIA NO GOOD. KRIANGSAK WAS PLEASED

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WITH SONODA'S COMMENTS.

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7. TANAKA INDICATED THAT BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THAILAND HAD GONE VERY WELL AND THAT THE THAIS OBVIOUSLY APPRECIATED SONODA'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN THAILAND. ON BILATERAL ECONOMIC ISSUES, THAI POSITIONS WERE PREDICTABLE BUT WERE NOT PRESSED STRONGLY. THE RTG ASKED FOR AN INCREASE IN ECONOMIC COOPERATION LOANS FROM THIS

YEAR'S \$150 MILLION TO \$250-350 IN FY 1979. SONODA LAUGHINGLY REJECTED SUCH A MAJOR INCREASE BUT PROMISED TO TAKE A "POSITIVE APPROACH" ON A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE ABOVE THIS YEAR'S LEVEL. (TANAKA SAID THAT ON THE BASIS OF SONODA'S REMARKS, THE JAPANESE EMBASSY WILL BE RECOMMENDING CONSIDERATION OF A 25 PERCENT INCREASE FOR 1979 OVER THIS YEAR'S LOAN LEVEL). AT THE SAME TIME, SONODA STRESSED TO THE THAI THE MAJOR PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THAI INABILITY TO USE FUNDS ALREADY COMMITTED TO MUTUALLY AGREED PROJECTS BUT STANDING UNUSED. HE NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING GOOD PROJECTS READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION. SONODA ALSO WAS ASKED TO PROVIDE SOME ADDITIONAL GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR PROCUREMENT OF CEMENT, FERTILIZER, AND CONDENSED MILK. TANAKA SAID JAPANESE AGREED. ACCORDING TO TANAKA, SONODA ALSO AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO A \$5 MILLION PROJECT FOR 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHAKRI DYNASTY IN 1981. THE PROJECT WOULD BE A YOUTH RECREATION CENTER IN A BANGKOK SLUM AREA.

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8. TANAKA SAID THAT SONODA IN HIS MEETING WITH KRIANGSAK STRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THAILAND AND ASEAN TO JAPAN'S SECURITY. SONODA TOLD KRIANGSAK THAT THE SECURITY OF THAILAND WAS THE SECURITY OF JAPAN AND THAT THE PROSPERITY OF THAILAND WAS THE PROSPERITY OF JAPAN.

9. IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT, SONODA INDICATED THAT HE WAS HOPEFUL OF EARLY AGREEMENT ON THE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY WITH THE PRC. UPPADIT ASKED HIM WHAT THE PROSPECTS WERE FOR SIGNATURE DURING SONODA'S VISIT TO PEKING, AND SONODA SAID THE PROSPECTS WERE GOOD BUT THAT THERE STILL HAS TO BE FURTHER NEGOTIATION ON THE "HEGEMONY" CLAUSE.

10. TANAKA SAID THAT INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM CAME UP BOTH IN PATTAYA AND IN THE THAI BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS. WHEN THE SUBJECT WAS RAISED BY ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS, SONODA MADE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT, OUTSIDE OF PERHAPS A FEW INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ALREADY IN JAPAN, GOJ WOULD NOT CONSIDER ACCEPTING ANY NUMBERS OF THE REFUGEES. IN THE BILATERAL DISCUSSION WITH THE THAI, SONODA MADE THE SAME POINT. SONODA DID EMPHASIZE THE JAPANESE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF \$10 MILLION TO THE UNHCR BUT, TANAKA WRYLY NOTED, THIS DID NOT SEEM TO MAKE MUCH IMPRESSION ON THE THAI.

11. IN OVERALL TERMS, TANAKA SAID JAPANESE BELIEVE THAT SONODA'S DISCUSSIONS WENT VERY WELL. HE THOUGHT SONODA'S TRAVELING PARTY WAS PERHAPS MORE EXUBERANT ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THEIR DISCUSSIONS THAN IS JUSTIFIED; HOWEVER, HE SAID THE JAPANESE EMBASSY HERE IS TAKING A SOMEWHAT MORE SUBDUE BUT HIGHLY POSITIVE VIEW OF THE VISIT.

12. COMMENT: ALL IN ALL, SONODA'S DISCUSSIONS WITH BOTH ASEAN

MINISTERS AND THE THAI SEEM TO HAVE GONE VERY WELL. HOWEVER,
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AS EMBASSY TOKYO NOTES, WE SUSPECT THAT ASEAN REACTION IS
SOMEWHAT MORE CAUTIOUS. IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THAI SENIOR
FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, THEY HAVE ALSO TAKEN VIEW
THAT SONODA MEETINGS WITH ASEAN AND RTG LEADERS HAD BEEN VERY
GOOD BUT NOTE THAT THE MAJOR BENEFIT WAS EDUCATING AND EXPOSING
SONODA TO ASEAN VIEWS. THE THAI PARTICIPANTS ALSO CONFIRM THAT
THE MEETING WITH ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WAS UNUSUALLY FRANK
BUT FRIENDLY.

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